

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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BROOKFIELD PULLS HUDSON YARDS BID; FOCUSES ON SITE ACROSS 10<sup>TH</sup> AVE.



Brookfield's Manhattan West.

COURTESY SOM

## AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR

Since the Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced five bidders to buy air rights over its Hudson Yards that span the lower West 30s from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the river, the Brookfield Properties bid has stood apart from the others. It rejected the MTA's guideline to create a platform over the yard, arguing that it could keep the rail lines in service by locating buildings on the avenues and their entrances at street level. It also employed 11 architecture firms, including SHoP Architects and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, in a proposal that won the affection of members of the local community board and passersby at the MTA's December exhibition. All of this has made the developer's decision to abandon the bid raise eyebrows in the architectural community.

One reason that Brookfield may have dropped its scheme is that it violated the city's 2005 zoning for the eastern portion of the site, meaning **continued on page 6**

COUNCIL LEADERS MAY USE WATERFRONT ACCESS IN BARGAINING OVER SOLOW PLAN



COURTESY MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY

## A LINE IN THE WATER

On February 25, a City Council hearing began the last phase of public review on Sheldon Solow's eight-building megaplan for the East 30s, and considered the urban conditions within the six-block river view site. However, changes to the

waterfront across the FDR Drive from Solow's project may drive more horse-trading over the project's specifics.

The hearing, which featured testimony from representatives of the Municipal Art Society and New York Building Congress, raised all

the issues on which Solow and the city have already come to terms. These included expanding a public playground from 5,500 to 10,000 square feet, reducing building heights, and shrinking the proposed office building's overall **continued on page 7**

MTA CAPITOL BUDGET MIXES MEGAPROJECTS AND MAINTENANCE

## DIGGING FOR DOLLARS

On February 27, the Metropolitan Transit Authority released its capital spending plan for the next five years. Coming in at \$29.5 billion, it's nothing if not ambitious. MTA Executive Director Elliot G. Sander told *The New York Times*, "The stakes are about as high as they can be." If passed, he said, the improvement plans will push the transit system into the future. If not, it could return to the dark and broken-down days of the 1980s.

The plan designates \$20 billion for upkeep on current lines and \$9.5 billion for special projects. But despite the cash boost, completion dates on big-ticket items like the near mythic Second Avenue subway and East Side Access, which extends the Long Island Railroad **continued on page 3**

COMMUNITY AND CITY REZONING PROPOSALS DUKE IT OUT

## DUMBO NEVER FORGETS

The Dumbo Neighborhood Association (DNA) has fought for over a decade to preserve the industrial landscape between the Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges. The group achieved a major victory in December, when much of the area was designated a historic district by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Now the city has proposed a plan to rezone a section of the neighborhood, but it only encompasses 12 of the 20 land-marked blocks, **continued on page 10**



MATT CHABAN

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COURTESY GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

GUGGENHEIM'S CONTROVERSIAL DIRECTOR HEADS FOR SANDIER PASTURES

## KRENS LEAVES—WHAT'S LEFT?

Last month, Thomas Krens, the man who defined the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation for two decades, announced he will no longer be running the place.

Like much of what Krens and the Guggenheim have proposed over that time, his public resignation was vague and tentative. Krens will stay on as an international adviser, and he will coordinate the construction of the planned Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, a cultural complex of buildings designed by Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, with smaller structures by such younger architects as Greg Lynn, Ben van Berkel, and Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture. The Guggenheim shares its site with the Louvre's grand Persian Gulf outpost.

As Krens gives up his day-to-day duties, he leaves a **continued on page 5**

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DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Dustin Koda

ASSISTANT MARKETING MANAGER

Anastassia Fisyak

EDITORIAL AND MARKETING ASSISTANT

Audrey Jaynes

EDITORIAL INTERN

Danielle Rago

CONTRIBUTORS

ALEC APPELBAUM / MARISA BARTOLUCCI /  
DAN BIBB / SARAH F. COX / DAVID D'ARCY / MURRAY  
FRASER / RICHARD INGERSOLL / PETER LANG /  
LIANE LEFAIVRE / LUIGI PRESTINENZA PUGLISI /  
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GENERAL INFORMATION: INFO@ARCHPAPER.COM

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CLIENT 9'S HEFTY TAB

As Governor Eliot Spitzer faced a room full of reporters in Midtown on March 10 and tersely apologized for his patronage of prostitutes, stunned New Yorkers were just beginning to think about the fallout. But it will almost certainly be widespread and bad. For starters, Albany has never had a knack for passing budgets, and this year's plan is still being hashed out. For architects, developers, and urban-ists, a few of the governor's proposals stand out: a five-year, \$9.3 billion capital plan to rebuild the infrastructure of SUNY and CUNY, a \$100 million trust fund for public housing, and \$110 million for park restoration. These valuable initiatives are among the many that may well get caught in the crossfire as members of the legislature jockey for position. Even more worrisome is the future of projects that require the expenditure of political capital, not just cash.

Take Moynihan Station, for example. The extraordinarily complicated and politicized process of converting the Farley Post Office into a new transit hub has involved city, state, and federal govern-ments, a consortium of developers, the owners of Madison Square Garden, the MTA, New Jersey Transit, the preservation community, and others. After almost 15 years, endless revisions, and many predictions of failure, the project had finally started to seem as if it would really move forward. Why? After the recent spate of stories in the local papers that the station project was on the verge of collapse, Governor Spitzer took notice, and things started to hap-pen. At the beginning of March, the governor went public with a plan to transfer control to the Port Authority from the Empire State Development Corporation, increase the state's financial contribu-tions, and help to find the remaining funds. None of these issues had been settled at the time of the press conference, but Spitzer's hands-on approach seemed to provide the crystallizing element for an unsettled solution. The deadlock that plagued Moynihan Station was not insurmountable, but it took a strong will and a horse trad-er's savvy to do so. It also took gubernatorial interest and credibility, both of which evaporated when Spitzer became Client 9 of Emperor's Club V.I.P.

Spitzer's one-minute statement to the press focused mainly on his immediate failures to family, constituents, and self, but there was one line that spoke to the larger view. "I don't believe politics in the long run is about individuals," he said. "It is about ideas and the public good and doing what is best for the state of New York." For the sake of Moynihan Station and other crucial projects in which the governor had a hand, let's hope he's right. The public good shouldn't suffer permanently for one man's mistake, which is not, as he also said that afternoon, just a private matter. **ANNE GUINEY**

DIGGING FOR DOLLARS

continued from front page

to Grand Central, are being pushed to 2015.

The beleaguered Fulton Street Transit Center will also get a \$295 million shot in the arm. Waves of community outrage have hit the MTA in recent weeks when the cash-strapped agency announced plans to rethink Grimshaw Architects' popular design ("Dome Drama," AN 04\_03.05.2008). The MTA insists the transit center will be built, but in a scaled-down form. "The budgetary increase assumes an aboveground component that conforms with the community's goals but does not include the oculus," MTA spokesperson Aaron Donovan told AN.

Grimshaw said it had made no specific plans but would work with whatever funds the MTA provides. Considering the original design was budgeted at \$375 million and the only bid came in at \$890 million, it's hard to say what exactly can get built. One person familiar with the MTA's thinking suggested the agency cannot agree on what it wants. "There's disagreement at the MTA about what to do at the project," the source said. "Some just want to stick to the generic."

Gene Russianoff, attorney for the Straphangers Campaign, said flashy projects should not be a priority. "I'm skeptical of megaprojects while some of the existing stations look like the House of Usher, collapsing around you," Russianoff said. "If you don't do things like replace cars, we'll end up where we were in the 1970s and '80s."

The most controversial part of the new spending plan may be where the money comes from. The current congestion pricing proposal will fund 15 percent of the budget, if the state legislature puts it into action.

That amount is smaller than expected, but Assembly member Richard Brodsky of Westchester thinks the MTA will not even see that much. For Brodsky, congestion pricing combined with a graduated fare increase is too much to ask from commuters. Asked for an alternative, Brodsky said, "I'm not in the business of advising the MTA."

Kathryn Wylde, president and CEO of the Partnership for New York City, disagrees. She said that congestion pricing is an easy way to bulk up the MTA's spending power, especially in light of a \$345 million federal grant earmarked for the program. "It's almost found money," Wylde said.

Even with congestion pricing accounted for and an assumed revenue of half a billion dollars from the Vanderbilt and Hudson Yards, the MTA can only identify sources for \$20 billion of its budget. A press release explained that this isn't a big worry: The \$9.5 billion gap is "much like the 2005-2009 Program when it was first presented." Then again, the economic outlook was much brighter. **WILLIAM BOSTWICK AND MATT CHABAN**

LETTERS

WRIGHT NOT WHITE (OR LIGHT GREY)

The recent decision by the Guggenheim Museum and the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to "restore" the exterior finish of the Guggenheim Museum to a non-original light grey color is an unfortunate ending to a long restoration. The suggestion that Wright's color choice was "uncertain" (as reported by *The New York Times* on Nov. 21, 2007) is a gross mischaracterization.

Although he did revise the type and color of finish during design, his final choice is confirmed by surviving color swatches in the Museum's archives with his initials of approval. That the exterior may not have been painted this specific color due to field sample error can be substantiated by archival and scientific evidence.

Color is always a powerful opinion-divider but in the case of the Guggenheim it is tan-

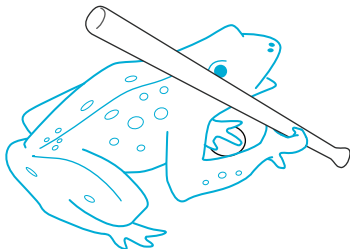
amount to experiencing Wright's full vision. Two options exist: the buff tan that Wright intended and the actual buff tan that was applied. Most insidious is the suggestion that such decisions are normally made with-out theoretical principles or robust scientific input. This couldn't be farther from the truth.

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EAVESDROP: ANNE GUINEY

## SOME MODEST PROPOSALS

These last few Sunday nights we've been glued to the TV, watching as many Jane Austen movies as possible, and this could explain why the immortal words of *Pride and Prejudice's* Mr. Bennet keep coming to mind—"For what do we study projecting the need for hundreds of billions of square feet of space to live, but to make sport for our neighbors, and laugh at them in our turn?" In that spirit, we had ourselves quite a chuckle the other day when reading **Blair Kamin's** reviews of two new architecture shows in Chicago, one at the Graham Foundation and the other at the Chicago Architecture Foundation. We will never, ever, ever criticize the former, because we may ask **Sarah Herda** for a grant someday, but the CAF doesn't give out money and so is fair game! Kamin praises both shows, and both seem interesting. We have to wonder what on earth was going through the curatorial heads at the CAF, however, when they settled on this title: *Do We Dare Squander Chicago's Great Architectural Heritage?* Hmmm, we need a second to think about this—is it a trick question or something? Gosh, we are stumped, but we're going to go out on a limb here and say we think not.

Speaking of odd titles and polemics, we also smiled at **Allison Arieff's** latest blog entry in *The New York Times*, "Is Your House Making You Look Fat?" It took us a minute to get the joke (we think it has something to do with fat Americans who have to drive everywhere) and then settled in for some good old-fashioned suburb slamming. The former *Dwell* editor mentions a Brookings study projecting the need for hundreds of billions of square feet of space to accommodate future growth, and then tosses in this provocative and inflammatory piece of rhetoric: "In planning for that need, why not think beyond the landscape into indiscernible swaths of cookie-cutter sameness?" Eureka! Why didn't we think of that? Okay, fine, not everyone shares our pleasure in thinking about transit-oriented developments all day long, but come on now, Gray Lady!

SEND ORIGINAL IDEAS OF BREATHTAKING SUBTLETY AND PENETRATING QUESTIONS TO [EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM](mailto:EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM)

## KRENS LEAVES—WHAT'S LEFT? continued

from front page Guggenheim molded in his image and an indelible imprint on museums internationally. Krens pioneered the creation of international museum outposts with the high-profile Guggenheim Museum Bilbao that made Frank Gehry a mainstream celebrity. The Guggenheim now has some half-dozen outposts, depending on how you count them, and the practice has been copied by the State Hermitage Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and more recently, by the Louvre and the Centre Pompidou.

Krens gave the Guggenheim over to unlikely objects, like motorcycles and clothes, both in shows funded by interested manufacturers like BMW and Armani; cars by Cai Guo-Qiang are now in the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue atrium. He also took art and high-profile architecture to gambling casinos in Las Vegas (with another project planned for a casino in Singapore, initiated without telling his trustees) and he transported art from under-funded Russian museums to western audiences that were eager to pay to see it.

Yet the man who sought "positions" in regions all over the world left some flops in his wake—in Rio de Janeiro, where public outcry over construction costs stymied a Guggenheim by Jean Nouvel; in Taiwan, where a Guggenheim master plan with buildings by Gehry and Hadid never got past the models; in downtown Manhattan, where a Gehry mega-museum died after 9/11; and in Guadalajara, Mexico, where a Guggenheim skyscraper by Enrique Norten hasn't been mentioned again since its trumpeted announcement almost three years ago.

Sources close to the museum say that before Krens stepped down, the Guggenheim struggled to find a replacement for the museum's director, Lisa Dennison, who left last summer for a job at Sotheby's. Her job is still not filled. Now the Guggenheim may have to search for two executives, just as the Metropolitan Museum of Art is seeking to hire a replacement for outgoing

director Philippe de Montebello.

Insiders say that the Guggenheim Board and any future director will refocus the museum away from expensive architectural globalism and toward its New York site and its neglected collection. The rhetoric echoes an approach suggested by Peter Lewis, the insurance tycoon and former board chairman, who left the board in 2005 after Krens refused to abandon plans for more expansion. Lewis was the Guggenheim's most important donor since the death of its founder. After leaving, he kept his promise to fund the conservation of the Frank Lloyd Wright pavilion's exterior on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. To date, the combined Guggenheim board has failed to match Lewis' generosity.

Krens' new role will free him to make deals and leverage real estate gambits with Guggenheim art, forgoing the administrative duties that were never his strength. It could also free him to work on behalf of other museums, and Krens could turn out to be an even bigger global brand than the institution he ran for 20 years. The architects, artists, and oligarchs in his circle are his personal capital, not the Guggenheim's.

To believe Krens, cities are still lining up to build and run a Guggenheim, or something that looks like one. Yet back on Fifth Avenue, the over-extended and under-endowed institution that Krens leaves behind is already scaring off potential successors.

DAVID D'ARCY



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Tel: 718-271-7572  
Designers: Handel Architects;  
Kevin Hom + Andrew Goldman Architects

With its gently curved roof and grand scale, the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Natatorium and Ice Rink resembles a wave breaking through the park. "The sensuous shape of the building is evocative of the movement" of the swimmers and skaters who will soon inhabit the space, said Blake Middleton, partner at Handel Architects. The 110,000-square-foot facility was part of the city's bid to host the 2012 Summer Olympics, and it is now the largest recreational complex in a New York City park. The architects' use of a subtle curve to join together two primary spaces, the pool and the rink, proved to be "a simple way to dramatically express a straightforward gesture," Middleton remarked. The roofing system also echoes the 1939 and 1964 World's Fair pavilions in the same park. The Olympic-size indoor pool features an adjustable floor that can move vertically over one-third of the pool, providing the ability to host both public swim and competitive meets. The rink is scheduled to open this fall, but the pool is now open to the public. This is one wave that everybody can catch. **DANIELLE RAGO**

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EAVESDROP: ANNE GUINEY

## OUR LADY OF THE TERRAZZO

Since our co-workers no longer find it amusing when, on answering the phone, we yell out, "Hey M\_\_\_\_, someone from Emperor's Club V.I.P on line 3 for you!" we've had to look elsewhere for entertainment. We were flipping through the Hollywood issue of *Vanity Fair* the other day and came across **Ingrid Sischy's** piece on the Palazzo Chupi, **Julian Schnabel's** ulcer-pink stuccoed Venetianoid building in the West Village. Seeing as the remaining units range from \$27 to \$32 million, the spread is as close as we will ever get to checking out the details inside, so we took a look. It is charming, in its way, though it looks about as Venetian as Alec Guinness looked Saudi in Lawrence of Arabia. But great eyeliner! Anyway, tastes more refined than ours also took a look: **Johnny Depp**, **Martha Stewart**, and **Madonna** have all wandered through. The latter, however, liked the building more than the view: According to Sischy, Madonna looked out at **Richard Meier's** Perry Street tower across the way and declared that compared to Chupi, it looked like a housing project. Meow!

## PLEASE TRANSFER FUNDS IMMEDIATELY...

As luck would have it, the very next day we found a possible solution to our Chupi-less living situation, right there in our inbox! "HELLO DEAR," the note began warmly, "I HAVE A CONTRACT FOR YOU." It continued on: "I WAS GIVEN CONTRACT TO DESIGN AND BUILD A STATE UNIVERSITY, FOR THE STATE, I GOT YOUR EMAIL FROM ARCHITECTURAL WEBSITE." We calculated that our cut of cut of this \$40,000,000 project in Nigeria is 40 percent, which gets us halfway to a duplex! Problem is, we are a gossip columnist, not an architect, and so just as Mr. Chris Chinedu of Current Technologies needs our help with a little bank transfer (and design skills, natch), we need yours, dear readers! We'll cut you in at half—just send along your contact and banking information, and your social security number, and we're in business!

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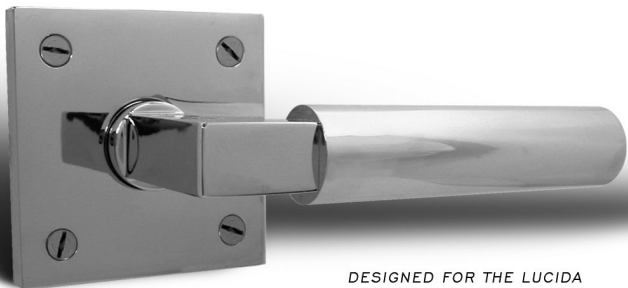
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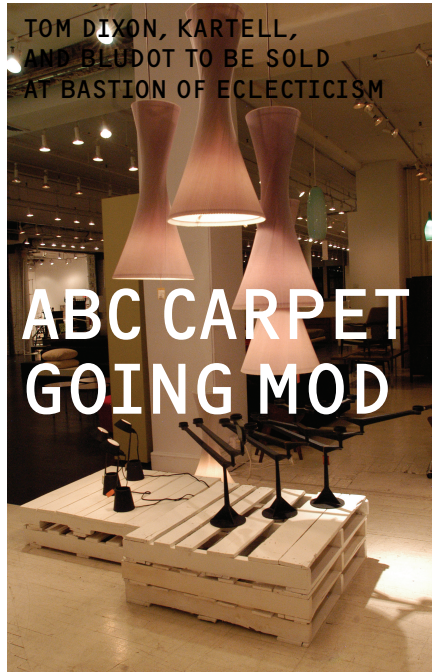
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TOM DIXON, KARTELL,  
AND BLUDOT TO BE SOLD  
AT BASTION OF ECLECTICISM

## ABC CARPET GOING MOD



SHEILA BROWN AT WARWICK BROWN

ABC Carpet & Home in Manhattan's Flatiron District still touts its ornate chandeliers, carved Indian beds, and Oriental carpets—but sleeker styles are on the way. With much fanfare, British designer Tom Dixon recently opened a store-within-a-store, and the Minneapolis-based affordable good design company Blu Dot has also carved out a space, with other companies soon to follow.

Dixon chose the location because "ABC had the space and ambition to support us, and we didn't overlap with their current

merchandise. Plus, they asked us," he explained. Officially launched in late February, his matter-of-factly titled Shop on the second floor of 888 Broadway features many items that fit right in with the ABC showroom's industrial-looking space. Dixon's 2008 collection includes numerous products that are deliberately a bit raw-looking, with a handcrafted aesthetic.

Fans of the designer will appreciate the opportunity to see some furnishings that can't yet be found elsewhere in the United States, including stainless steel Punch Lights inspired by the cooling fins of a motorcycle engine and the Link Table, made of rough-hewn, geometrically patterned cast-aluminum. The store also carries brass Beat Lights created by Indian artisans using a traditional hammering technique. His more ethereal Twist Pendant lights feature fanlike folds of cotton in a spiraling shape. With product installations designed by Dixon himself, Shop has the designer's largest collection of items anywhere in this country.

Open since December, the Blu Dot's boutique features items such as Barbarella tables, which have perforations inspired by pizza boxes. Blu Dot—previously sold primarily on the web with an emphasis on flat-packing and prefab—wanted a New York presence, and ABC offered a high-profile and economical means to achieve that, according to a Blu Dot sales associate. Herman Miller and the Italian purveyor of high-end plastic furniture Kartell are also reportedly pondering their own stores-within-a-store at ABC. **LISA DELGADO**

**AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR** continued from front page that a fresh rezoning would likely add at least 15 months to the schedule.

"Everyone who has worked on this will tell you they would like to relook at that zoning," said a source associated with another bidder, who asked for anonymity. "I thought Brookfield's proposal was entirely feasible from an urban design point of view, and there were good, intelligent principles in it."

Those principles may yet drive some of the site's planning. It will take at least a decade to build out the project, and no developer will want to sink a lot of capital into it without knowing the prospects for Moynihan Station just to the east. So most observers (and some participants) expect players to lean on or borrow from each other in executing the project. That means Brookfield could get back in, as an investor in a single building or by virtue of its control over the site's eastern gateway.

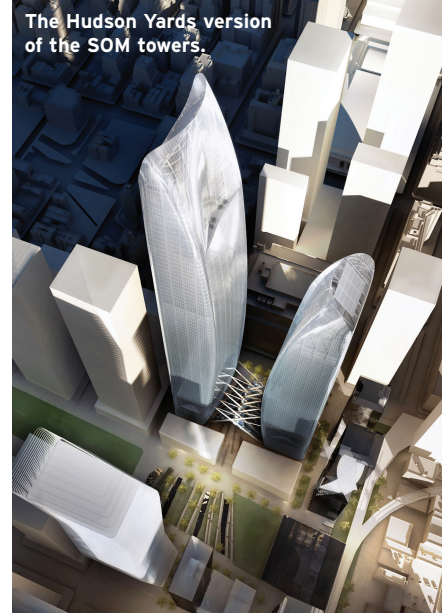
Brookfield recently secured \$105 million in predevelopment financing for Manhattan West, a 5.4 million-square-foot mixed-use project featuring twin SOM skyscrapers. That project, on a deck from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Dyer Avenue, will abut Hudson Yards, so Brookfield will still affect how construction crews, buses, and pedestrians eventually cross from Moynihan Station (or Penn Station, if it doesn't change) into the Hudson Yards site.

The local community board and other well-organized civic groups in Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen have advocated a plan integrating Moynihan and the Brookfield site into plans for Hudson Yards. Their advocacy has already led the MTA to release design proposals to the public: After the authority selects a bidder, support for the Brookfield idea may bring that model back into the

picture.

"We're all wondering whether there's going to be room for change in urban design," said someone who has participated in the bid process since last year. "The community itself is looking for it. The problem is, I don't think anyone is going to take the time to build consensus."

Governor Eliot Spitzer, at a February 28 speech, promised resolution of Moynihan Station's unsure financing: MTA spokesman Jeremy Soffin said the agency will consider bids this month. As economic assumptions change, Brookfield's choice to sit out the term-setting on Hudson Yards may prove wise later on if zoning problems make the project seem less financially; it doesn't mean the company won't get involved at a later point. **ALEC APPELBAUM**



The Hudson Yards version of the SOM towers

COURTESY ARCHITECT



## TWO DESIGNS PRESENTED FOR GOWANUS BROWNFIELD



COURTESY THE HUDSON COMPANIES

# DIRTY WORK

Two proposals for 5.8 acres along the shores of the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn—both pitched by the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)—look broadly similar. “Plan A” offers 725 units of housing, 22,000 square feet of retail, 9,013 square feet of community space, and 86,529 square-feet of open space. “Plan B” promises 774 units of housing, 38,800 square-feet of retail, 26,400 square-feet of community space, and 98,300 square feet of open space.

But when it comes to design, the development proposals competing for a toxic brown-field could not be more different. On February 25, HPD presented to Community Board 6 the plans by Monadnock Construction/the Related Companies and the Hudson Companies for a mixed-use, mixed-income project meant

to embody the urbanized and green future of the notoriously polluted waterway.

Because the board has no influence over the department's decision, the presentation was more a courtesy than anything else, and the competing parties were not even identified. Only after the designs, by Handel Architects and Rogers Marvel Architects respectively, spilled onto the blogosphere did the department acknowledge them, but even then, the differences between the two projects were not fully appreciated. As Jonathan Marvel put it, “What we're looking at are two different schemes at different ends of the urban spectrum.”

Rogers Marvel's design, a collaboration with landscape architects West 8, offers a towers-in-the-park approach, aiming to create a stronger urban fabric with more open space and storefronts. Their

nine buildings range from six to 12 stories, with those on Smith Street clad in brick that transitions to a mix of brick and glass on the water. “With that number of buildings, we actually hope to invite more designers into the project,” Rob Rogers said.

The Handel design consists of three larger buildings that Gary Handel said are more reflective of the consistent street wall heights of the surrounding neighborhoods. “The goal has really been to create a neighborhood that is not a neighborhood in and of itself but part of the neighborhood,” Handel said. He also said that the clustered buildings creates a more energy efficient design, sustainability being a marquee of both projects on the contaminated site.

Craig Hammerman, district manager for Community Board 6, said the differences, at least to the community, were moot. “I guess either one would be acceptable,” he said. “But to a lot of people, we shouldn't even be having this discussion yet, given the condition of the site.” HPD is expected to choose a winning scheme in March. **MC**



COURTESY RELATED COMPANIES

**A LINE IN THE WATER** continued from front page footprint. Solow has also committed to a 630-seat school, which the city would build by 2012. The 8.7-acre plan by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Field Operations, and Richard Meier & Partners looks set to go forward, said Jasper Goldman, who testified for the Municipal Art Society, but unresolved problems remain. As Goldman explained, civic activists worry most about public use of 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> streets, which Solow's plan removes from the street grid, and how the project may affect a waterfront park along the East River from 38<sup>th</sup> Street to the United Nations. “Everybody agrees the open space is well designed and likes the east-west orientation of the buildings, but people were nervous about the idea of it shutting down at 1 a.m. This is such a massive development that the public space should be a real public park.”

In addition, Solow would need to provide easements from his property to city and state agencies to enable a deck over the FDR Drive to the new waterfront park. Solow has endorsed the idea, but stopped short of pledging his money toward the project, which the Campaign for an East Side Waterfront Park projects could cost around \$116 million.

Local City Council member Dan Garodnick, who founded the park campaign,

has stressed his district's paucity of open space. He may relent on some issues, like the impact on the skyline of four nearly identical towers, in order to secure funding for deck construction or concessions on opening 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> streets. At a February 21 announcement laying out the waterfront coalition's agenda, Garodnick told reporters that he and the developer were “in the midst of discussions about height, density, and open space.”

These issues should be resolved in negotiations before late March, when the Council will vote on Solow's plan. Goldman forecasted that an easement will emerge as part of a deal. “What's less clear is the idea that 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> streets will be public, and that's what Council negotiations are for,” he said. “We said the developer should consider a Riverside South model, where open space is mapped as parkland but maintenance is contracted to a private entity.”

To Goldman, a new waterfront park would cap Solow's development by tethering it to its most famous neighbor. “A waterfront park would create a place to enjoy looking at the UN Secretariat,” he said. But Solow's flexibility about keeping his development fully accessible may determine how soon that park comes into being.

**AA**

# CHANGE IS GOOD



In this age of heightened environmental concern much is said about the recyclability of building materials. But perhaps the archetypal form of sustainable design is the recycling of *buildings*—changing older, inefficient structures to allow new uses. Designing in steel makes this possible, as was the case at the **Institute for the Study of the Ancient World**, where **Selldorf Architects** relied on steel's strength, light weight, and simplicity in cutting, welding, and joining to create a modern, new library within a 19th-century townhouse.

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 19, 2008

OPEN&gt; DESIGN CENTER

> **SHEILA C. JOHNSON  
DESIGN CENTER**Parsons, The New School  
for Design  
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Designer: Lyn Rice Architects

NOAH SHELDON

Along the periphery of the newly-opened Sheila C. Johnson Design Center at Parsons, which includes several galleries, an auditorium, archives, and new learning and meeting spaces, floor-to-ceiling glass with deep aluminum window sills serve as indoor and outdoor seating for students, while a flush ground floor and sidewalk obscure the separation from the streetscape. Inside, a glass diamond-grid roof blankets the new interior quad, where an earlier maintenance shop and alley had been scooped out during construction like seeds from a melon half, said architect Lyn Rice, connecting the ground floors of four pre-existing buildings and offering a sunlit view of the “back-of-house landscape: fire escapes, water towers, pipes, and all.” The original 1917 concrete formwork marks are maintained and the novelty of the new spaces accentuated—quite obviously in the florescent green meeting room (above) overlooking the quad, where a rugged bark wall hovers amidst the concrete and steel, and an aluminum cage reveals twisted pipes concentrated around the elevator core. With the largest architectural elements clad in student artwork, and a tack board pivot wall forming a visible critique room on the busy corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, design students articulate and define an identity through a ceaseless interaction with the urban panorama. **AUDREY JAYNES**

STEPHEN  
PERRELLA,  
1956–  
2008

As a tireless advocate for the possibility and necessity of the radical in architecture, Stephen Perrella seized a moment at the dawn of the digital avant-garde in the 1990s to argue for a typology of architectural production that he coined HyperSurface architecture.

Born on Staten Island, Stephen Perrella first studied applied art and graphic design at Iowa State University, only to later return to his boyhood dream of becoming an architect and completing his architecture studies at the Pratt Institute School of Architecture in 1991. He later went on to informally study

philosophy at the New School as a means to deepen his understanding of the relationship between culture and architecture, and to develop a theoretical voice.

During the years of his architectural studies at Pratt, he sensed the movement in debate surrounding critical architecture practice and theory, editing two volumes of the *Pratt Journal of Architecture*, publishing the work and ideas of theorists, artists, and architects, among them John Hejduk, Mark Wigley, and Peter Eisenman, who would later become central figures in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century architectural avant-garde.

It was through his work on these journals at Pratt that Bernard Tschumi, Dean of Columbia GSAPP, invited him to become editor of the GSAPP Office of Publications. Last week, Tschumi said, “He came along right when architectural practice was changing from hand-drawing to generating images by computer, and he was a front-row witness and promoter of that incredible time.” It was during his tenure at Columbia that he became known as a fervent advocate of the possibilities of and necessity for the radical in architecture, while editing both the GSAPP faculty newsletter *Newsline* as well as the faculty’s journal *Columbia Documents*.

Columbia in the 1990s was the seminal school of emergent avant-garde thought and practice, and Perrella became a champion of those he deemed to embody the radical in architecture; years later, many of these became established as the elite thinkers of our generation.

Perrella was not satisfied with merely publishing and advocating the radical in

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architecture, but went on to develop and coin a production typology he termed HyperSurface architecture. The theory of HyperSurface architecture went beyond the possibility of not only topological forms that emerged as a result of computer applications. It also argued for a practice that seized on the immateriality of capitalism, namely the media image. Perrella wanted to think through the infusion of form with media and media with form to work *between* the two, or as he argued, from “the middle-out.” His belief was that formal and spatial possibilities in architecture

cannot be understood apart from the immateriality and destiny of capitalism in the form of the image. This was the genesis of his attempts in theoretical writings and in a series of speculative projects to find an architectural language that had its origin between the two, privileging neither one or the other, but rather fusing them in one stance.

I got to know Perrella in 1999 after inviting him out to Sydney to speak at a student conference. From that series of email exchanges and subsequent week together in Sydney, a working relationship developed between us, as well as with two other

colleagues from Ljubljana, Slovenia, for the dissemination of the HyperSurface project, both in lectures around Europe and the United States. Over the years and through several speculative projects, Perrella became both a teacher and mentor, as well as a close friend. His contribution to rethinking the possibility of radical architecture will perhaps one day find a new lease on life in a future generation.

**DANIEL PAVLOVITS IS THE EDITOR OF HAECCEITY INC, AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF CRITICAL AND RADICAL THEORY IN ARCHITECTURE.**

## MILTON GLASER TO TRANSFORM CHELSEA THEATER INTO NEW BRANCH OF SVA

# CURTAIN RAISER



now the exact programming of the building remains unclear. He expects that one of the stages will be enlarged and that the building's currently nondescript facade will be used as an exhibition space for site-specific art. He hopes the exterior design will promote community involvement.

Established in 1974, Milton Glaser Inc. takes on a gamut of design work, including advertising, printed materials, logos, store displays, and what the company calls “dimensional work,” which includes product design and architectural interiors. Glaser designed a number of restaurants, including the Trattoria dell'Arte and the Rainbow Room.

On projects like the theater, Glaser believes his relationship with the architect is critical: “The architect is generally the key personality involved, and if you're a designer you have a similar background. You need to work out a personal relationship.... It's a matter of becoming devoted to the task at hand and not to your own ego.”

One of the most omnipresent designers of his generation, Glaser has weighed in on the ethics of design with his book *The Design of Dissent*, co-written with Mirko Ilic. It examines graphics used to promote or protest war. This fall, his new book *Drawing Is Thinking* will be released by the Overlook Press.

The book addresses Glaser's concern that many of today's students think of drawing as vocational, a means for earning a living only. “Thinking and drawing are for everyone, even for those who don't get close to the fields of architecture or design. You could say a drawing is a way of perceiving reality—it's a fundamental tool to understand the world.”

**ANGELA STARITA**

Last month, the School of Visual Arts signed a 26-year lease for a theater in Chelsea whose new interior and exterior will be designed by SVA interim chairman Milton Glaser, renowned designer and creator of the I Heart NY logo. The 20,000-square-foot Chelsea West Cinemas at 333 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street will be converted into lecture halls for SVA students and faculty. Glaser, speaking from his offices on West 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, said that the theater was bought in part as a way to reach residents of Chelsea where several other SVA facilities are housed. The school bought two buildings on West 21<sup>st</sup> Street in 2006 and this February entered into a 14-year lease for a 5-story building on West 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The spaces will help house the

school's programs in arts criticism, digital photography, and design criticism, all created within the last five years.

The theater, originally built in 1963 as a one-screen movie house, has undergone the inevitable multiplexing renovations of the 1970s and '80s. In its most recent incarnation, it housed two auditoria with 350 and 550 seats each, and was frequently used for red-carpet premiers. Laurence G. Somers will be the architect for the redesign of the Chelsea theater. SVA hopes to open the theater by fall 2008.

Glaser, renowned for his graphic designs, says that the new space will fulfill a wide range of functions: “Seminars, lectures, premiers, corporate use, any number of cultural activities,” he said. But right

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## DUMBO NEVER FORGETS

*continued from front page*

in the half of the district to the east of the Manhattan Bridge. DNA had hoped to protect everything south to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Fortunately, the group began developing a plan three years ago in response to Dock Street, a 20-story development adjacent to the Brooklyn Bridge. DNA released its plan on February 27.

Both plans seek to normalize the often-illegal housing that has supplanted the light manufacturing for which the area is zoned without damaging what remains of the industrial base. Both also call for contextual zones that will regulate building heights for the first time, ranging from 50 to 75 to 125 feet, depending on the specific zoning, and stress full-lot coverage, creating a building envelope akin to the area's factory buildings. The city's plan incorporates the now-familiar inclusionary housing program, which provides a density bonus if developers include affordable housing. Paul Graziano, a planner and preservationist with Associated Cultural Resource Consultants who developed the community plan, said the inclusionary housing program has shown little promise. Instead, Graziano proposed what he calls "inclusionary industrial," which would encourage light industrial uses on lower floors, thereby helping to address environmental problems associated with factory conversions while also maintaining a link to the area's manufacturing and

artistic past.

The sticking point remains how much to rezone. DNA is still hoping for a more expansive program, such as one passed in the late 1990s for Vinegar Hill, Dumbo's eastern neighbor. That rezoning took three small, separate landmarked plots and surrounded them with a larger contextual rezoning. As a result, any neighboring development would have to conform to the historic district. Graziano said that with Dumbo, the city seems to be taking the opposite approach, only rezoning half the historic district.

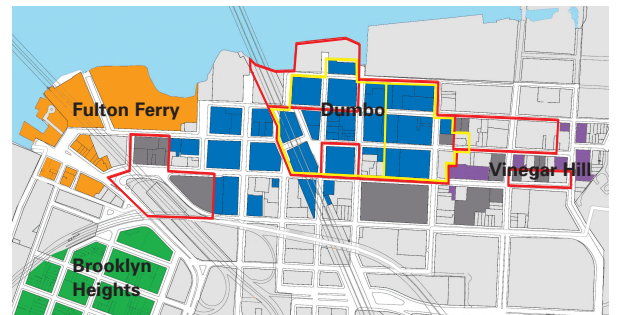
Graziano's plan extends beyond the historic district, meeting up with three others: Fulton Ferry to the west, Brooklyn Heights to the southwest, and Vinegar Hill to the east. The remaining southern boundary is the highway. "This is a very contained area," Graziano said. "It's really got some definitive boundaries, and so whatever happens within these 25 square blocks affects each area very, very significantly." As opposed to current development trends for those areas, Graziano proposes the shortest buildings of the district.

Jennifer Torres, a Department of City Planning

spokesperson, said the city had already rezoned other parts of the district, which is why it was looking at such a small area, or there were other projects in process on sites outside the district, which remains DNA's main concern. When the Dock Street project was proposed three years ago, a groundswell of community and political opposition defeated the project, but it is due before the City Planning Commission in weeks, highlighting the ongoing tension in the neighborhood over development. Two modern luxury towers that already border the Manhattan Bridge, one at 23 stories and another at 33 stories, exemplify the type of development DNA fears.

Doreen Gallo, vice-president for the group, said she remains hopeful the city will adopt or at least incorporate DNA's proposal into its own. "I think our plan is great, I think it will fly, and it's based in reality," she said. "Unfortunately, the city's rezoning may not even include all of the district, so it is important that we can work together towards that goal." **MC**

— DNA rezoning proposal  
— City's rezoning proposal  
— Development "soft spots"



## AT DEADLINE

### NO WAY, AIA!

After a groundswell of political and preservationist outcry, a zoning text amendment proposed by the AIA New York chapter was quietly withdrawn in late February. The proposal, in the works for four years and released in October, would have altered the city's contextual zoning framework, which was created in the 1980s to protect the historic character of certain neighborhoods. The AIA said that the four changes to high-density areas (for rear dormers, corner lots, street wall heights, and housing on narrow lots) and another for side yards in low-rise neighborhoods would have modernized the code and allowed for development in a city hard up for housing. Given widespread fears about overdevelopment, that is a step many in the city are not ready to take.

### DOWNSIZING BEFALLS BROOKLYN "COUPLE"

At least in design terms, it was a perfect marriage. Frank Gehry's Miss Brooklyn will be his first skyscraper, and it's planned to be one of the tallest in the borough, just a foot or so below the Williamsburg Savings Bank Building when it is completed as part of Bruce Ratner's Atlantic Yards. Then a partnership between Ratner and CUNY led to Mr. Brooklyn, unveiled last November. At more than 700 feet, the Renzo Piano-designed academic-and-office tower would have easily topped its two predecessors by nearly 200 feet. Now plans for both are scaling back, due to financial turmoil at Forest City Ratner. Though it might keep its 511-foot height, Gehry's tower will drop in bulk from 908,144 square feet to either 528,000 square feet or, with the addition of a hotel, 692,652 square feet. Meanwhile, Piano's project will not be built, replaced instead with a ten-story academic building, hopefully with the help of some other starchitect.



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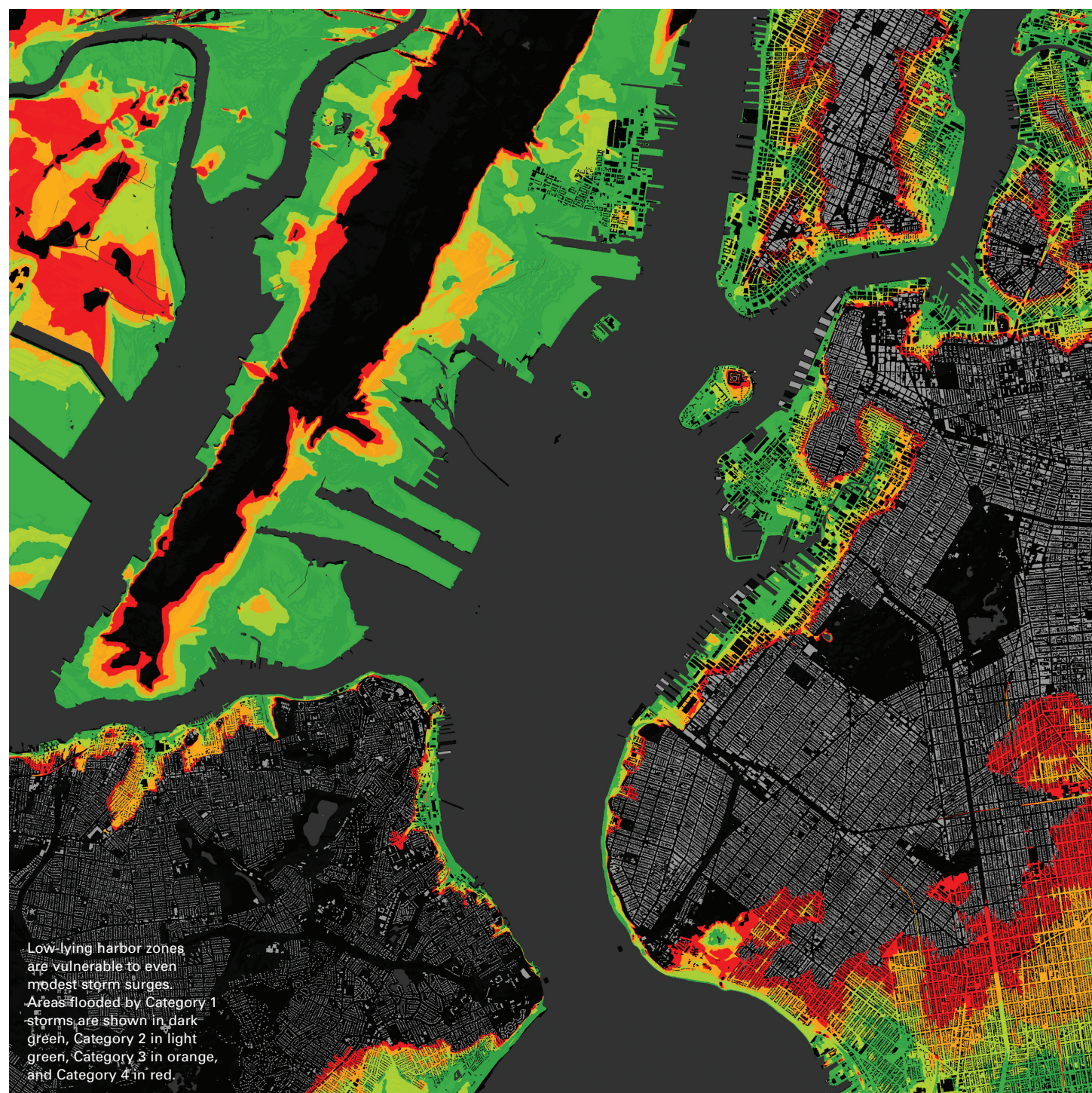
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**Atlanta and its neighbors in the Southeast seem to have settled into a permanent state of drought, but New York has the opposite problem: every year, the levels in the harbor rise. The two phenomena are flip sides of the same coin—the inexorable and accelerating process of climate change, which presents a difficult set of problems for architects and urbanists. More and more firms are exploring ways to adapt to its effects and plan for the future. Jeff Byles explores why, when it comes to sustainability,**

**blue is the new green.**

# water works



One tenth of an inch may just be a splash. But sea level in New York creeps that much higher every year, and worsening climate impacts could make that splash several feet deep by the end of this century, meaning a soggy future for nearly one million of the region's residents who live within three feet of the spring high-water mark. Factor in worsening storm surges, and today's 100-year flood zone may well become a 10-year flood zone—wreaking \$350 billion in damage to New York City under the severe scenarios the state's Emergency Management Office is now studying.

"If you look where major development projects are going in New York, many are located right in harm's way," said Klaus Jacob, the outspoken Columbia University expert on sea-level rise, pointing to condos sprouting in Williamsburg or Columbia's Manhattanville campus, sited at a vulnerable low point near the Hudson River. "That campus will start to look like Venice in a hundred years," he warned.

London has its Thames Barrier. Dutch cities are fortified for the 10,000-year storm. But New York? "Coastal cities around the world that intend to be around for the next hundred years have done incredible work," said Michael Fishman, founder of the consulting practice Urban Answers. "In North America, we have very little to show."

That is starting to change as architects, ecologists, and engineers grapple with a hybrid of structure and landscape that is well-suited to the world's rusting wharves. Some call it aquitecture—a new, blue alternative that is catching up with the green building movement as the next wave of sustainable urban design. "It's not a building, not a pier, not a boat," said Fishman, who teaches a waterfront studio at Columbia University's Graduate



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 19, 2008

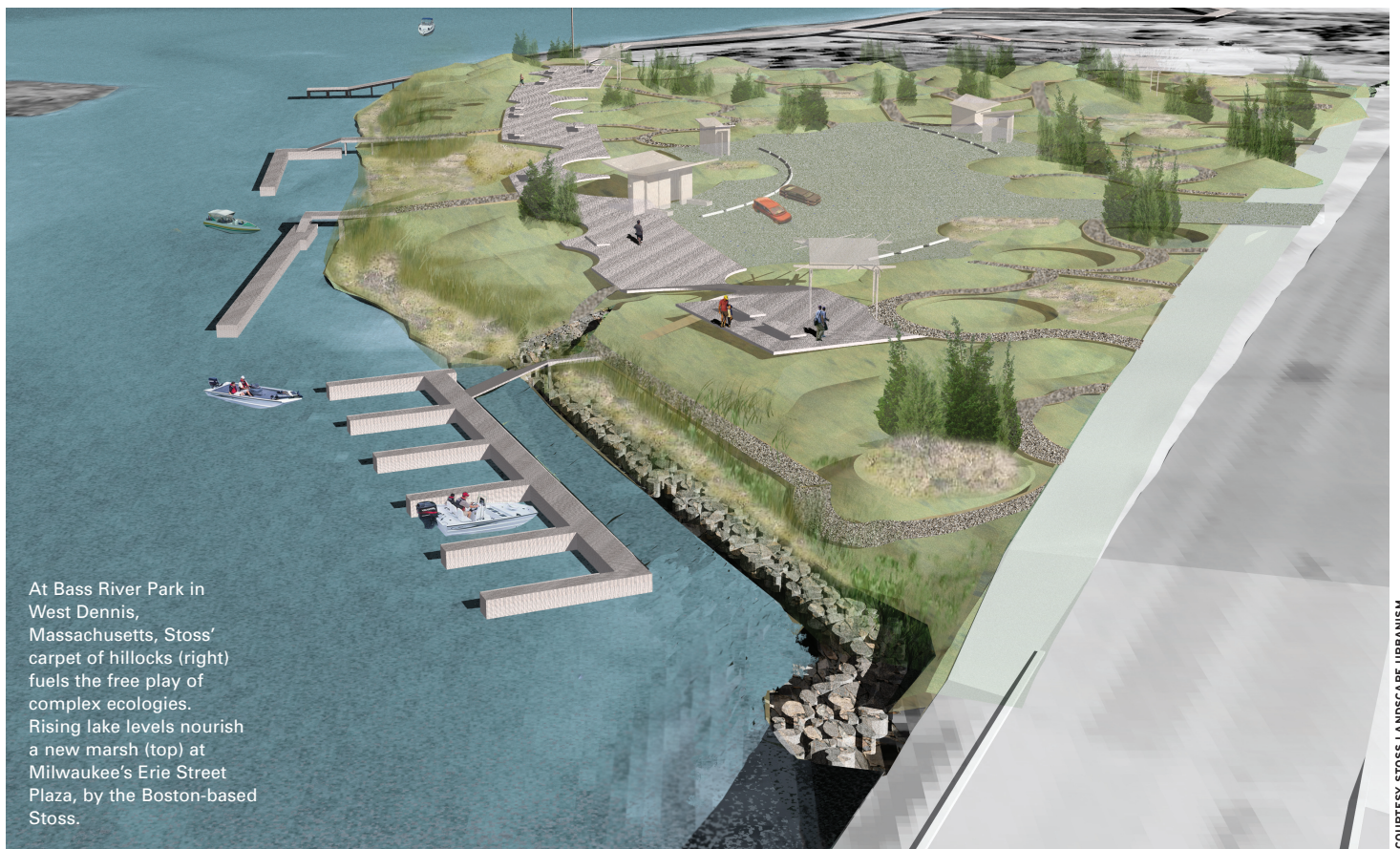
School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP). "It's part water, part wildlife. Major development around the world is going to embrace this adaptation of post-industrial megastructures."

In our wet new world, the postapocalyptic attitude is this: Bring it on. "Existing waterfront wetlands are going to be swamped," said structural engineer Guy Nordenson, who is studying the consequences of sea-level rise with a multidisciplinary team that won the American Institute of Architects' 2007 Latrobe Prize. They've hatched a radical proposal to revamp Upper New York Bay with an archipelago of hundreds of islands that would temper the destructive energy of storm surges. The proposal, which won a \$100,000 award and will be refined in the coming months, presents a larger vision of New York Harbor as a focal point for regional development, like St. Mark's Basin in Venice—a watery Central Park for the coming century.

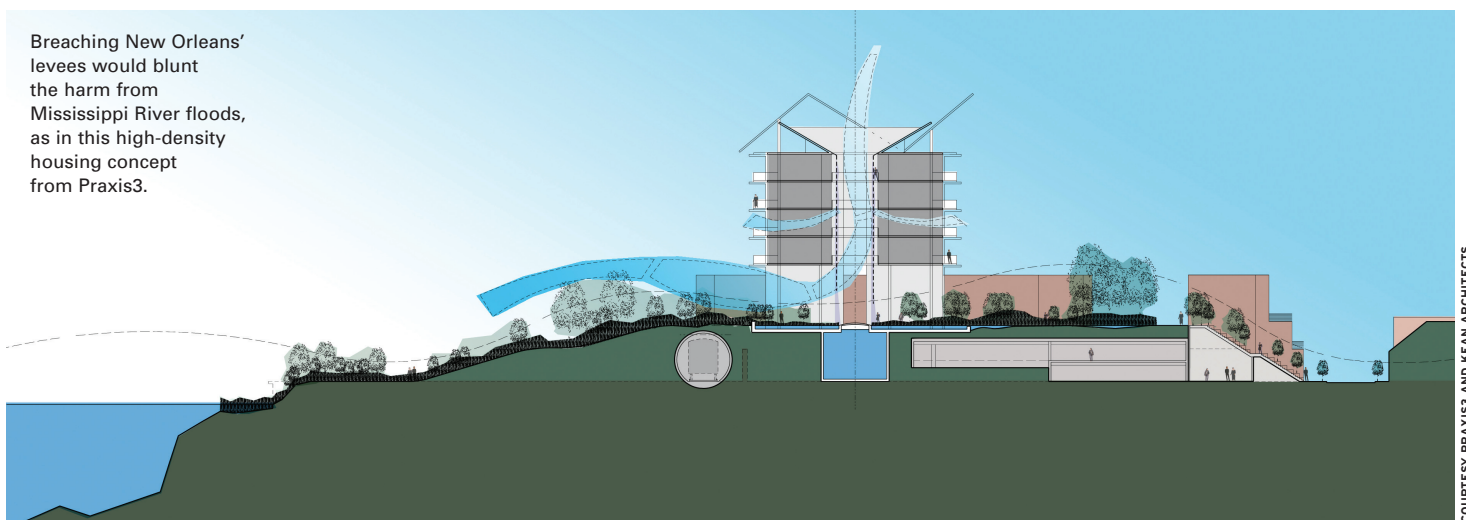
Designers in New York and beyond are taking small steps toward Nordenson's grand aquapolitan vision. A pair of projects from Boston-based Stoss Landscape Urbanism shows how modest interventions in the marine edge can prove paradigm-shifting in their own right. The firm lets flood conditions have their way with a waterfront site at Erie Street Plaza, located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at the confluence of the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan. In the midst of a rough-edged working waterfront, the park contends with lake levels that rise and fall by as much as 6 feet over roughly 20-year cycles. Stoss' solution was to slice slots into an existing steel bulkhead, allowing high lake levels to inundate a new zone of native grasses and revive a marsh condition long obliterated by industry.

It also makes a larger public point. "We're allowing people to engage with this momentary high point of the lake cycle, so that it becomes very much an actor in the experience of that open space," said principal Chris Reed. A similar strategy informed Bass River Park in West Dennis, Massachusetts, a 2.5-acre parcel that rests on land that was once salt marsh. Stoss designed zones of red cedar, sand plain, wet meadow, and salt marsh, each of which vies for botanical dominance amid changing climate variables. "We're building in resilience and flexibility from an ecological standpoint," Reed said. "No matter how high or low the sea level is, there are places where these individual plant communities can thrive."

Showcasing water's presence in the urban landscape required a complex approach for Margie Ruddick of Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), who has helped lead the design for a one-acre park at Queens Plaza. Working with artist Michael Singer, designers created a permeable paving system that features



COURTESY STOSS LANDSCAPE URBANISM



COURTESY PRAXIS3 AND KEAN ARCHITECTS



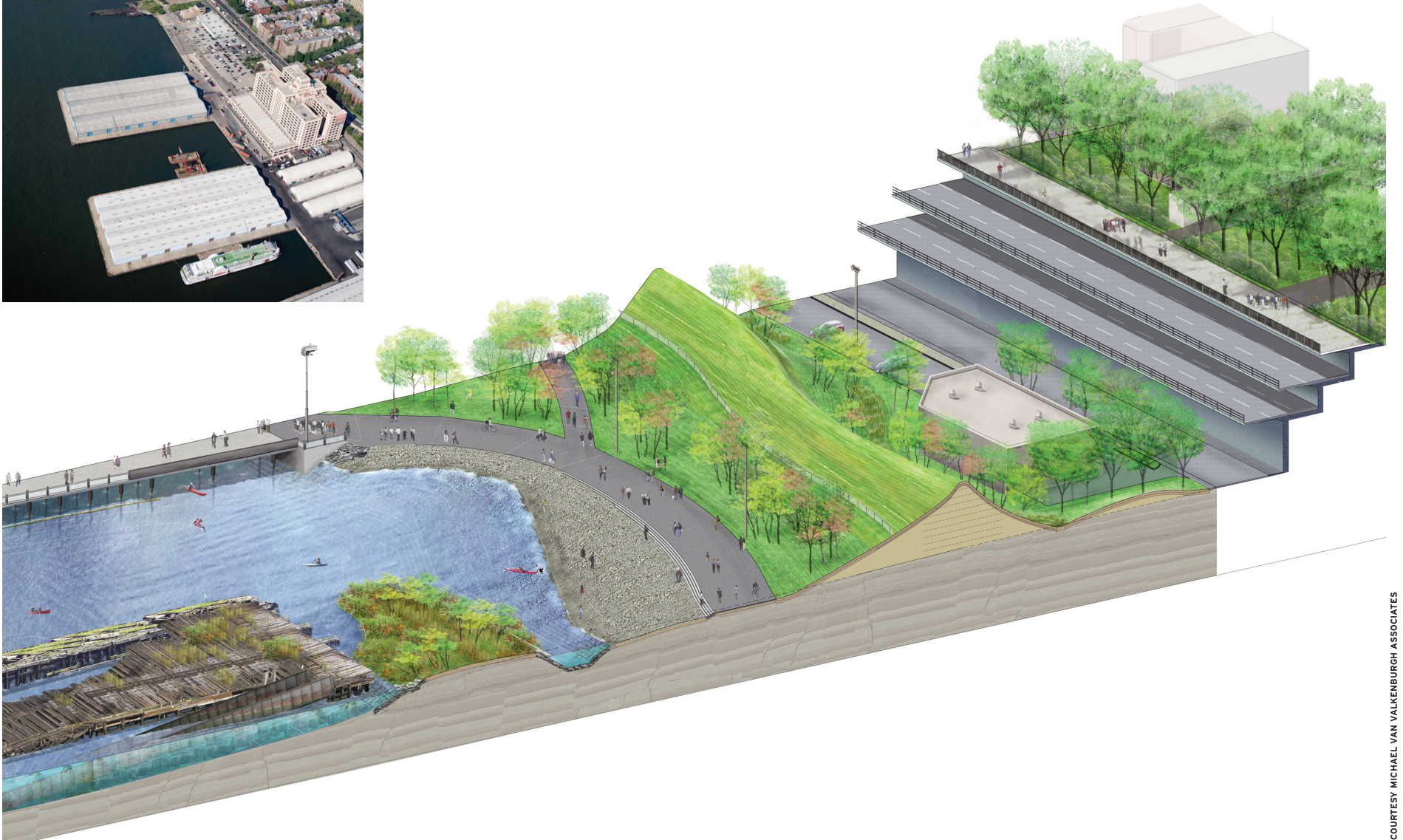


COURTESY WRT DESIGN/MICHAEL SINGER/MPA

A subsurface wetland forms the heart of WRT's design for Queens Plaza (above, left); runoff from the Queensboro Bridge feeds a lushly planted rain garden (above, right).



For areas atop a newly graded edge at Brooklyn Bridge Park (left), Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates positioned significant plantings to skirt the 100-year-flood zone (below).



COURTESY MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 19, 2008

runnels with weep holes to collect water from paths and open spaces. A rain garden at the base of the Queensboro Bridge captures bridge runoff during storms, directing it to lush plantings. Below grade, a lozenge-shaped subsurface wetland detains water once it has filtered through street-level plantings. But working with water requires updated design chops. WRT and collaborators Marpillero Pollak Architects, who won a 2008 AIA New York chapter design award for the project, note that architects need to embrace a more unruly aesthetic. "A couple of years ago this project would have looked incomprehensible to a lot of architects," Ruddick said. "There's a kind of terror of things that don't look organized and orderly."

If a Category 4 cyclone hits the East River, Brooklyn Bridge Park will be exhibit A of that messiness. But it should still be around. In Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates' design for the new public space, the sharp-edged bulkhead is banished in favor of a more natural riparian edge among adaptively reused piers. Careful thought is being given to storm threats, said principal Matthew Urbanski. "We've gone to great pains to shape the land in such a way that the significant tree plantings are above the 100-year flood level, so we don't get salt-water inundation," he explained. Beyond a calm-water basin that shelters small islands of natural habitat, a stabilized riprap edge protects against wave energy. Upland hills are planted with meadow grasses and canopy trees, while farther inland, freshwater swales capture stormwater from adjacent asphalt before it reaches the river.

"There's a general consensus that we have to start working within the natural systems and reinforcing them," said David Hamilton, principal of Praxis3, which won a recent round of The History Channel's City of the Future competition with a proposal to liberate Atlanta's natural streams from 1,900 miles of buried pipes and catchments. Contending with severe drought in the Southeast, Hamilton's Atlanta-based team, in collaboration with EDAW, BNIM Architects, and environmental engineering firm Metcalf & Eddy, proposed a series of "waterscapes" to restore the natural watershed and spawn piedmont forest instead of sprawl. Existing drainage systems would be converted into aquifers to store ever-scarcer precipitation. The team aims to develop the idea as a model for drought-prone cities, where bureaucrats are perking up their ears. "When you start running out of water, politicians start paying attention in a hurry," Hamilton said.

New Orleans officials might want to consult his firm's entry for a post-Katrina design competition that rethinks that city's levee system. Collaborating with architect Lee Kean, Praxis3 proposed breaching floodwalls to create softer berms

that ease over a block-size parcel in the Bywater neighborhood. Elevated green space weaves this natural terrain back into the city; a reflecting pool and cistern collect water on site. "The Mississippi River could actually go through its flood stages without doing any damage," Hamilton said.

If there's a bright side to climate change, it may be the opportunity to drag bolder designs out of the closet. "Some of these visionary projects are really legacies of the 1960s and '70s," said architect Lindy Roy, who is studying the impacts of climate change in Africa with her students at Columbia's GSAPP this semester. "We need to look at things with that kind of breadth. Otherwise, we make the sexy forms, and then all of the environmental stuff gets handed over to sustainability experts and engineers."

In other words, thinking the unthinkable can be an adventure. "Our goal is to make people excited instead of terrified," said Adam Yarinsky, principal at Architecture Research Office (ARO), who is working with Nordenson's Latrobe Prize team. ARO's provocative entry for New York's City of the Future episode did just that, making a virtue out of Gotham's waterlogged fate. Envisioning low-lying neighborhoods deep-sixed under some 36 inches of water due to melting polar ice caps, ARO designed an optimistic new city for the year 2106, built of thin, pier-like buildings rising above Manhattan's flooded downtown streets. Kayakers paddled languidly among ruined storefronts, as verdant public promenades bridged the waters overhead.

Take that, Rotterdam. When the big one hits, we may not be high and dry. But at least we'll be floating in style.

**JEFF BYLES IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT AN.**

In ARO's vision of Manhattan now and in 2106 (right, top and bottom), melting polar ice caps make for a much soggy city.



COURTESY ARCHITECTURE RESEARCH OFFICE







THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 19, 2008

## RAISE THE I-BEAMS

*Support and Resist: Structural Engineering and Design Innovation*  
Nina Rappaport  
Monacelli Press, \$50



COURTESY SCHLAICH BERGERMANN UND PARTNER

The Berlin Central Rail Station designed by von Gerkan, Marg and Partners with engineer Schlaich Bergermann und Partner.

Architectural commentators have become overwhelmingly preoccupied with the possible meanings of contemporary built forms, linking them to the so-called Bilbao effect, or to the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, or, simply, to the architect's ego. In *Support and Resist: Structural Engineering and Design*

*Innovation*, Nina Rappaport takes a different—and much welcomed—approach. She eyes canonical and well-known recent buildings and examines their structural makeup, introducing readers to the engineering principles undergirding these projects.

Many of the examples will be

familiar to most readers. The CCTV in Beijing, the ICA in Boston, and the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart, for instance, are all widely published buildings. And their respective architects—Rem Koolhaas, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and UNStudio—have achieved a degree of celebrity that crowds

all others out of the spotlight. Rappaport, however, opens the curtain on the other leading role: the structural engineer. She unveils the structural framework, and not just the artistry, of the buildings themselves, and in so doing, exposes the central contributions of engineers—by nature, more

collaborators than celebrity figures—who make these buildings possible.

Rappaport, an architectural writer and the editor of publications at the Yale School of Architecture, argues that in the modern era there have been three stages when the engineer's role has been particularly salient. The first was at the turn of the last century, when avant-garde architects such as Le Corbusier and Erich Mendelsohn became fascinated with engineering as they were laying out the principles of modern design. The second episode, she explains, occurred in the 1950s when new typologies such as the skyscraper were executed on larger scales. And the third critical moment of contributions by engineers? Right now.

With celebrity architects becoming increasingly engaged in making landmark forms, with new materials available to designers, and with new urban conditions, the nature of the profession has changed again. Contemporary engineering responds, establishing its "focus on the structural optimization of form, with a commitment to the architect's design aspirations and program in performative rather than prescriptive engineering."

She divides the book into 14 chapters, each representing a firm practicing today. Among these are Arup, Buro Happold, Guy Nordenson, Werner Sobek, Atelier One, and Bollinger + Grohmann. With each, she presents background (mostly biographical information on the founding principals), along with a few case studies from the firm's portfolio. She mixes both lighter, personality-driven anecdotes with more rigorous presentation of case studies from each firm's portfolio. This approach brings a spirit

## NEW SPIRIT OF CHINA

*Building China: Five Projects, Five Stories*  
Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Place  
Through May 31

A single narrative has dominated press reports of China's rapid urbanization: Everything authentically Chinese has been torn down, only to be replaced by graceless high-rise buildings and, for window-dressing, the occasional OMA or Herzog & de Meuron bauble. Happily, the projects displayed at Manhattan's Center for Architecture under the title "Building China: Five Projects, Five Stories" suggest a counter-narrative. Desheng Noble Town, an office park on one of Beijing's ring roads, is a particularly strong example of new Chinese architecture. Its designer (Cua Kai), despite working within a large government firm (the 6,000-employee Architecture Design & Research Group), came up with a site plan that recalls the

*hutongs*—narrow alleys lined with courtyard houses—that had occupied the site for centuries. A new alley opens onto seven handsome, 60-foot-high buildings alternating with shrine-like pavilions; the result feels respectful of the past, not reverential. As Cua Kai notes in a videotaped interview presented as part of the exhibition, "We weren't trying to be authentic; we were trying to capture a moment of transition."

Also capturing that moment are a brick house for an artist in Nanjing by Atelier Zhanlei, and two new campuses for the China Academy of Arts in Hangzhou by the rising star Wang Shu. To create more than two million square feet of new buildings without resorting to oppressive repetition, Wang Shu wisely relied on a wide variety of materials and forms, both Chinese and western-inflected (with references to Aalto and Le Corbusier), while creating a series of highly dynamic public spaces. More than seven million salvaged bricks and tiles, some centuries old, were incorporated into the structures, giving them an instant patina.

Alas, in a country whose urban population is growing by more than 20 million each year, there can't be enough recycled bricks to go around. And when architects go beyond

Atelier Zhanlei's Brick House in Nanjing.



surface treatments to develop new programs and paradigms, conflict ensues. In Anren, a Sichuan province, a philanthropist named Fan Jianchuan announced plans to build a complex of museums to house artifacts of the cultural revolution (1966-76). One, a timepiece museum, was designed by Liu

Jaikun in a style reminiscent of Louis Kahn, with bricks forming powerful cylindrical and cubic spaces—cavernous rooms that become haunting repositories of everyday objects. Yet the wall text at the Center for Architecture, written in part by Wei Wei Shannon of New York's People's Architecture, reports: "Today,



of personality into the work, demystifying some of their design decisions. In tracing the professional lineage of each firm, one of the book’s likely unintended messages is the nearly hegemonic influence of Arup in contemporary design. At least six of the firms emerged from under the wings of Arup, accounting for half of the book’s material.

In treating such sophisticated and specialized subject matter—often considered impenetrable by those without an engineering background—Rappaport’s discussion is both thoughtful and accessible. Her presentation is supported by a rich array of imagery. Unpublished construction shots complement photography of finished projects. She also includes drawings, diagrams, and sketches, revealing the process of design engineering.

The book’s organization reins in the effectiveness of Rappaport’s argument. In dividing the material by firm, she ends up providing a biographical cross-section of current practices rather than generating an overarching narrative to address new achievements in engineering. As a result, it becomes a monograph 14 times over and does not quite capture the larger story of progress it wants to describe. Treated as a survey of contemporary practice, however, it is an important work, illuminating to most readers.



COURTESY WILKINSON EYRE



COURTESY MICHAEL MATTGAR ARCHITECTS

Top: Alpine House, Kew, designed by Wilkinson Eyre with Dewhurst Macfarlane. Above: Ministructure No. 16 in China by Michael Mattgar with Guy Nordenson.

One of the book’s greatest strengths is in conveying that design and engineering are not separate pursuits. The relationship between engineers and architects has been a perpetual curiosity to both practitioners and observers, with disciplinary boundaries at times hard to distinguish. A spate of recent publications underscores this interest. *Building* by Bill Addis (Phaidon, 2007) surveys the 3,000-year history of engineering. And

Andrew Saint, an English architectural scholar, takes on the issue directly in *Architect and Engineer: A Study in Sibling Rivalry* (Yale University Press, 2008).

Rappaport manages to cut through the so-called sibling rivalry. She tells the story of engineering as an inherently collaborative enterprise and one that engages design at its most intrinsic levels of disciplinary knowledge.

**JOHN GENDALL IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.**



IWAN BAAH

with ten of the 20 museums completed, the development has reached a standstill. The quality of the project as a whole, in terms of architecture and the exhibitions, is lacking.” A municipal art museum designed by Urbanus for the Dafen neighborhood of Shenzhen has faced even greater setbacks.

The site was already redolent with art: Each year, Dafen produces more than a million oil paintings—many of them replicas of Van Goghs and Matisse. Urbanus hoped that the museum’s ground floor would become an open-air market for paintings and its roof a park easily accessed **continued on page 18**

# MAN ABOUT TOWN

Frank Lloyd Wright in New York:  
*The Plaza Years, 1954–1959*  
Jane King Hession and Debra Pickrel  
Gibbs Smith, \$29.95

In 1954, a truck en route from Spring Green, Wisconsin, pulled into the traffic turnaround at Fifth Avenue and 59<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. A few Taliesin apprentices jumped out, unloaded a collection of Wright-designed plywood furniture, and took hammer and nail to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor corner suite at the Plaza Hotel, soon to be known as Taliesin East. Frank Lloyd Wright had arrived in what he deemed the nation’s “ultimate proving ground,” a city he famously loved to hate. From 1954 to 1959, Wright lived at the Plaza while overseeing the construction of the Guggenheim Museum, entertaining celebrities, writers, and socialites, and conducting an unprecedented self-promotion campaign from his “elegant perch.” *Frank Lloyd Wright in New York*, by Jane King Hession and Debra Pickrel, is an entertaining and at times hilarious compilation of photographs, anecdotes, and brief thematic essays on

Wright’s Plaza suite office in 1955.



COURTESY GIBBS SMITH

the Taliesin East period.

Wright moved primarily to oversee the construction of the Guggenheim, but it was also a calculated decision to establish the third and final phase in his career. If the original Taliesin was about the advancement of organic architecture, and Taliesin West was about the possibilities of suburban development, the foundation of Taliesin East was not only about leaving “a lasting architectural mark on the glittering metropolis,” but a concerted effort to advance his Broadacre City philosophy from the nation’s media center.

Wright, who thought the Plaza “was built by the Astors, Astorists, Astorites, the Vanderbilts, Plasterbilts, and Whoeverbilts, who wanted a place to dress up and parade and see themselves in great mirrors,” felt the hotel was “the best part of New York.” The authors find it remarkable that the futurist had such **continued on page 18**

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**MAN ABOUT TOWN** continued from page 17  
affection for the historicist design of the Plaza, but, after all, his life was full of provocative contradictions, which has always been a recipe for success (or at least publicity) in New York.

Wright loved to hold court with the press and clients in the Oak Room. As a former apprentice recalled, Wright delighted in “knowing how to be a nineteenth-century gentleman among people who still appreciated that sort of thing.” He preferred Irish whiskey neat, but the waiter almost always served it in an ice-filled glass. In response, as Brendan Gill recounted, “Wright would pick up a spoon... lift the cubes out one by one, and proceed to flip them across the green-carpeted floor, to the astonishment and pleasure of the other patrons.”

While a substantial portion of the book is devoted to the construction saga of the Guggenheim, Hession and Pickrel include excellent and concise descriptions of his other New York-related work. This includes his unrealized 1929 proposal for towers around St. Mark's on 10<sup>th</sup> Street, an auto showroom amidst the newly built “poetry-crushers” on Park Avenue (Wright's payment: fine imported vehicles), the Hoffman House in Rye, the Cass House on Staten Island, and his unrealized design for the Belmont Park racetrack.

In New York, Wright's working relationship with Elizabeth Gordon, editor of *House Beautiful*, flourished and for a while, his organic designs seemed poised to become the nation's dominant style. She encouraged him to tap into the “Populuxe” phenomenon and the consumer explosion of the 1950s, and Wright designed and marketed furniture, dinnerware, rugs, and other furnishings to the masses. The book captures the spirit of this marketing effort with a collection of images and copy from the magazine.

An entire chapter, called “Master of the Medium,” is devoted to how this genius of self-promotion thrived in endless television appearances, radio interviews, and press conferences. As Hilary Ballon notes, Wright was an early master of the sound bite and seemed to be tailor-made for television. He appeared on NBC's *Conversations with Elder Wise Men*, told the *Today* show that grass and flowers would bloom in the streets of New York in 25 years, and even appeared as the mystery guest on *What's My Line?* The most famous and captivating of his television appearances was *The Mike Wallace Interview*, which aired in two segments in 1957 on ABC, complete with harshly lit close-ups and plenty of grilling from Wallace (Wallace writes the introduction to the book).

But the crux of the Taliesin East story is the arduous, 16-year process of design-



Wright with architect Jeffrey Ellis Aronin.

COURTESY GIBBS SMITH

ing the Guggenheim, Wright's only major project in New York; one he promised would make the Metropolitan Museum “look like a Protestant barn.” It was complicated by numerous redesigns, code infringements, disputes with the museum directors, curators, and artists, and hostile criticism from the press and public.

When push came to shove, Wright had the ultimate expediter, Robert Moses (a.k.a. “Cousin Bob” who was, in fact, a distant relative), on his side. After four years of negotiations, Moses reportedly ordered the building commission to “Damn it, get a permit for Frank. I don't care how many laws you have to break.”

Even after the official drawings were approved and released, Wright still faced a standoff with the Guggenheim's director, James Johnson Sweeney, over the design of the exhibition spaces—which included a protest from 21 artists including Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, and Robert Motherwell—and that grew so tense that Wright threatened to leave the project: “You all, curator included, know too little of the nature of the mother art: architecture,” he declared.

The controversial building opened to famously mixed reviews. One of the book's many entertaining sidebars is a list of provocative descriptions of the Guggenheim from the press and public (“bobsled course,” “Hamburger Heaven on earth,” “big white ice cream freezer,” etc.).

In 1957, while touring the unfinished Guggenheim Museum with Aline Saarinen, Wright described how the building would “bring Central Park across the street” and expounded on its natural energy: “You put a capital ‘G’ on God. All my life I've been putting a capital ‘N’ on nature. I know in my heart that it is all the body of God we're ever going to see.” He left New York on January 27, 1959 and passed away in April—several months before the official opening.

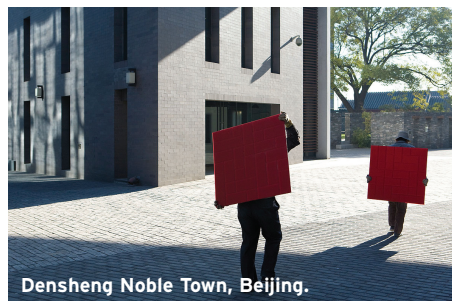
**KEENAN HUGHES IS A GRADUATE STUDENT IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION AT PRATT INSTITUTE.**

**NEW SPIRIT OF CHINA** continued from page 17  
by flyover ramps. But according to the curators, the ramps have been barricaded by the city and the galleries within are largely dark. They attribute this to a lack of foresight on the part of government officials that has “forced architects such as Urbanus to confront and respond to questions beyond their normal areas of expertise.”

Challenges to architects have never been as daunting as in 21<sup>st</sup>-century China. By presenting these five projects, the curators have performed a useful service; with their uncommonly candid appraisals, they offer real insight into the architectural

evolution of a nation of 1.3 billion people.

**FRED BERNSTEIN WRITES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES, METROPOLITAN HOME, AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS.**



Densheng Noble Town, Beijing.

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If you find it difficult to conceal those messy laptop cords strewn all over your desk (left), SpaceStation offers a solution. Available in black or white, this compact desk organizer (left, below) has an internal coiling system for your cables. A USB plug connects to your laptop, while an internal four-port USB hub is available to connect additional devices, such as a scanner, iPod, and camera. SpaceStation even has a page holder and an accessory slot for business cards, making it a neat freak's dream.

**Blum**


Axo Light  
[www.axolight.it](http://www.axolight.it)  
Spring is in bloom at Axo Light. Blum, the latest collection of blown-glass-and-metal suspended ceiling lamps by designer Marcello Furlan, is reminiscent of the form of a carnation. Densely populated glass vases seem to blossom out of a chrome-plated sphere at the center; each vase contains a single lightbulb, which helps to propagate light in all directions. Available in crystal (pictured) or chrome-plated glass, the lamp comes in 31-bulb, 19-bulb, and single-bulb versions. A matching vase is perfect for containing the sorts of pretty, petaled plants that inspired Blum's form.

RESOURCES

**Open: Natatorium** (p. 5): The pool consultant for the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Aquatic Center is Wallover Architects, 717-295-7754, 941 Wheatland Ave., Ste. 304, Lancaster, PA 17603, [www.walloverarchitects.com](http://www.walloverarchitects.com). Structural engineering was provided by Geiger Engineers, 2 Executive Blvd., Ste. 410, Suffern, NY 10901, 845-368-3330, [www.geigerengineers.com](http://www.geigerengineers.com).

**Open: Design Center** (p. 8): The custom millwork for the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center was fabricated and installed by Legere Woodworking, 80 Darling Dr., P.O. BOX 1527, Avon, CT 06001, 860-674-0392, [www.legeregroup.com](http://www.legeregroup.com). The custom aluminum flooring was supplied by Aluma Floor, 740 Annoreno Dr., Addison, IL 60101, 630-628-0226, [www.aluminumfloors.com](http://www.aluminumfloors.com).



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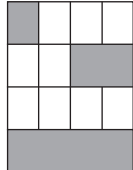
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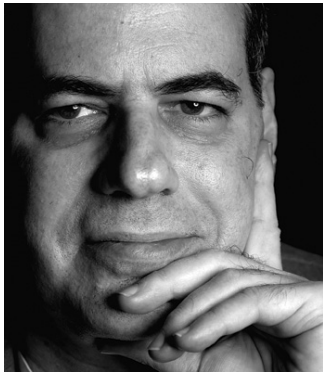
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FRED CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

## AVE ATQUE VALE

On January 31, at a memorial service for Herbert Muschamp, the late architecture critic for *The New York Times*, Lisa Dennison, now a chairman at Sotheby's, revealed that she had been working with Muschamp on a series of exhibition proposals for New York's Guggenheim Museum where she was then director. Here are three excerpts he wrote up on classical themes that Dennison shared with *AN*, showing Muschamp at his visionary best.

### Via Piranesi

The ramp is a street—the Via Piranesi—that coils through space, time, and the history of ideas. The side galleries are side streets, or the interiors of imaginary Roman palaces along this street. The ground floor is a plaza, adorned with plantings and sculpture and ringed by cafe tables. In the evenings, an orchestra plays.

The street begins at the top of the ramp, with the excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii, breaks off at the base, with recent buildings like the Seattle Public Library, and generally adheres to a chronological order. Piranesi's engravings dominate the window displays. They are supplemented by the work of artists like Goya and Fuseli, who also probed the dark side of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment, and by designs for neo-classical buildings like the United States Capitol that were directly influenced by Piranesi's ideas.

The street also passes by windows through which we get glimpses of fields other than art and architecture, including archaeology; photography; stage design; cinematography; psychoanalysis; exploration and tourism; and computer animation. The overarching theme of the show is the relationship between the individual mind and the modern city as a stage for collective imagination. The Via Piranesi

marks a symbolic threshold between the inner and outer worlds. This ambiguity reflects the changing status of the architect that Piranesi himself represented.

Where Palladio exerted the ideal of reasoned order into architectural practice, an ideal that would materialize centuries later in the New Objectivity of Mies van der Rohe and other modern architects, Piranesi stands for the articulation of emotional content. One of the objectives of the show will be to trace the evolution of subjectivity in architecture from Piranesi's time to our own.

"Via" here should be taken to mean "through" as well as "street." In Piranesi's own time, collectors of his engravings discovered Rome "through" Piranesi. This show should use Piranesi as a lens for focusing a broader set of cultural issues and relationships: How did conceptual art affect our perception of "paper architecture" like Piranesi's? How have modern media like movies, television, and digital communications affected the relationship between interior and exterior space? What are the origins of the "division of labor" that assigned to art the expression of subjective points of view and to architecture the task of manifesting the ideal of objectivity?

The show can't, in other words, be just a happy success story about

the struggle of the creative spirit against the forces of artistic convention and social oppression. It must also reveal the potential for architecture's complicity with those forces—even when architecture is at its most artistically creative. It should be faithful to Piranesi's enduring capacity to disturb.

### Hey, Venus!

If there (sob!) can't be a Via Piranesi, then it seems to me the best alternative is to present something tightly focused on the Wright building, an exhibition that offers a fresh interpretation of the design.

A good case can be made for interpreting the Guggenheim as, in effect, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Temple of Venus. This may seem whimsical at first, but in fact the evidence exists to back it up: in Wright's biography; in his predilection for, and other uses of, the spiral form; in his deliberate archaism; in his religiosity about architecture; and, above all, in the inherent formal, spatial, and structural properties of the design itself, and in the connotations Wright saw in them.

I would not propose that this is the sole "legitimate" interpretation of the building; simply that this view has come into clearer focus 50 years after the building's completion than was possible when the building was new. And do you know what was the Number One

pop song in early 1959? Why, Frankie Avalon's *Venus*. I'm stuck on this image of people walking up Fifth Avenue and seeing that great Paleolithic fertility fetish thrusting her chest out in the street and thinking: "Hey, Venus!"

### Antinous A GoGo

For all kinds of contemporary reasons, there has to be a show on Antinous. Antinous has to do with the emergence of a modern cosmopolitan ideal. The emperor Hadrian closed the borders of the empire and dedicated himself to the cultivation of Mediterranean culture. Antinous is the muse figure and later god who helped inspire him in this ambitious project. The simplest meaning Antinous held for Hadrian is probably the truest and the most modern. Hadrian was in many ways an "outsider." It can't be easy for any emperor to find someone he can just be himself with.

I really don't think this is just about Hadrian making a fetish object out of his boyfriend, but about his wanting to create a place in the ancient pantheon for the human bond as a condition of peace and a sense of feeling at home in one's skin.

Call For Entries

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Call For Entries

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16 May  
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4 June  
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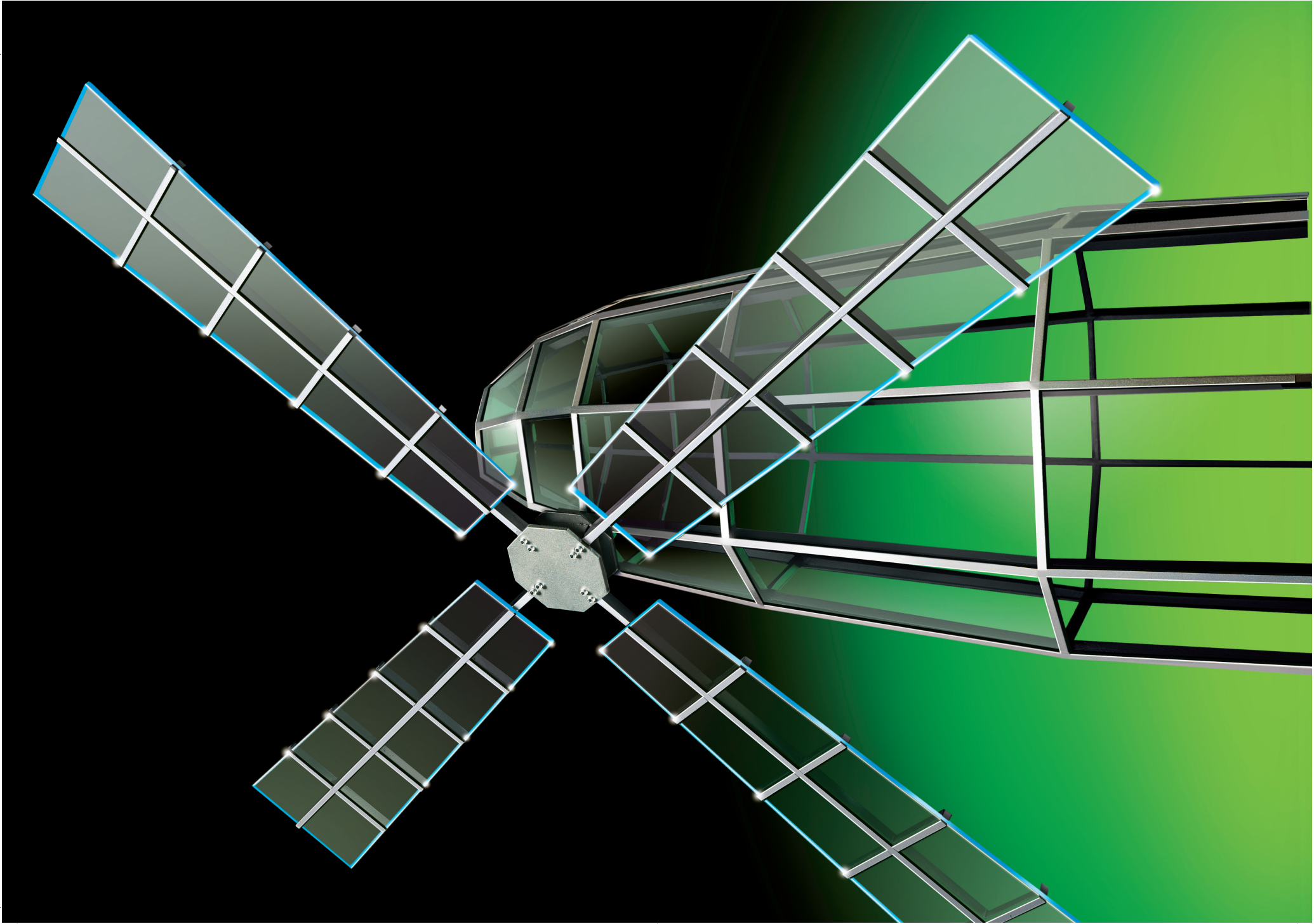
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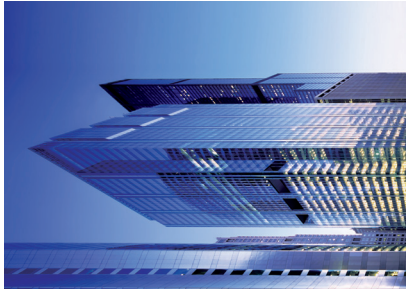
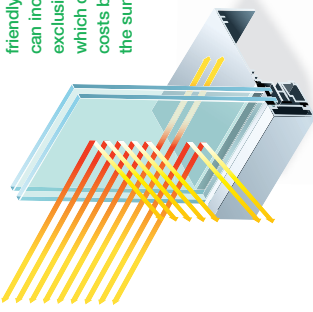
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